

war, struggle to build more just communities, foster education for justice and peace, eliminate poverty and advance sustainable development for future generations.

A MULTI-RELIGIOUS CALL TO ACTION

As religious leaders, we commit ourselves to advance shared security through advocacy, education, and other forms of multi-religious action, and to share this Kyoto Declaration within our religious communities.

We call on all sectors of society—public and private, religious and secular—to work together to achieve shared security for the human family.

Specifically, the Religions for Peace World Assembly calls on:

(1) Religious communities to:

Resist and confront any misuse of religion for violent purposes;

Become effective educators, advocates and actors for conflict transformation, fostering justice, peacebuilding, and sustainable development;

Draw upon their individual spiritual traditions to educate their members on our shared responsibilities to advance shared security;

Strengthen peace education on all levels;

Hold governments accountable for the commitments they make on behalf of their peoples;

Network locally, nationally, regionally and globally to foster multi-religious cooperation among the world's religious bodies; and

Partner with governments, international organizations and other sectors of society to confront violence and advance a new notion of shared security.

(2) The global network of Religions for Peace to:

Foster high-level multi-religious cooperation around the issue of shared security;

Build, equip, and network inter-religious councils locally, nationally, and regionally;

Strengthen the global Religions for Peace network as a platform for collaboration to advance shared security;

Further commit to actions for women's empowerment and women's human rights within its structures at all levels;

Embrace the central position of religious women and place gender concerns at the center of the shared security agenda;

Keep religious youth and their concerns at the center of its agenda and promote their full involvement in advancing shared security;

Support and collaborate with the Peacebuilding Commission of the United Nations;

Advocate practices that advance sustainable development and environmental protection; and

Partner with all sectors of society, especially in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

(3) Governments, International Organizations, and the Business Sector to:

Support the efforts of religious leaders to address violence within and beyond their communities, and include them as appropriate in political negotiations surrounding conflict situations;

Forge partnerships with religious communities to achieve the Millennium Development Goals to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, combat disease, and advance sustainable development;

Harness advances in science and technology toward peaceful purposes and to eliminate poverty and advance sustainable development; and

Seek out religious networks for their ability to reach vast numbers of people and their capacity to effect change.

We ask all people of goodwill to support and collaborate with religious communities as we work toward shared security for all.

These commitments and the calls to action that arise from them express our most deeply held and widely shared religious beliefs.—
Kyoto, Japan, August 29, 2006.

TELECOM REFORM

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I rise today to highlight the critical need we have in this country for broadband deployment. We are currently ranked 12th in the world in broadband deployment, and we must improve on this meager standing to be competitive in the world market.

The telecom reform legislation that has been reported by the Senate Commerce Committee is the right step in encouraging more broadband. I applaud Chairman STEVENS and the rest of the committee for reporting this important bill. We need to end bureaucratic regulation on the video and broadband markets so that more competition will come to the marketplace. Americans deserve to have choices in who provides their telephone service, their cable service, and their broadband internet service. We have the opportunity to get this done for our constituents, and I urge the Senate to pass H.R. 5252, The Advanced Telecommunications and Opportunity Reform Act of 2006, expeditiously.

Telecom reform has hit the national stage, and I was proud to support the Advanced Telecommunications and Opportunity Reform Act of 2006 when the Commerce Committee carefully considered the legislation. Our committee voted on this bill over 10 weeks ago, so it's time for the Senate to act. This is our chance to get it right on telecom reform and save cable consumers money on their bills. Despite the hard work of the Commerce Committee, some of our colleagues are holding up this important bill. I believe it is past time to bring this bill to the floor for a debate and a vote.

This legislation will usher video competition into communities across the U.S., and it will catapult rural areas into the 21st century digital era. By setting national franchise standards, negotiations between video service providers and local authorities will change from a years-long struggle to a maximum of 90 days. Accelerating the entrance of new companies into our communities will increase television choices, which ultimately lead providers to lower their rates and improve their service.

By doing away with the unnecessarily long local franchise process, current and new companies can quickly reach rural communities, where we need it most. Small companies that can't possibly break through the existing red tape will be able to quickly roll out quality service to cable- and high-speed-deprived areas. At the same time, larger companies will have opportunities to increase their investment and build better services to reach even more customers. This is a win-win situation for my State and the country.

Also, this bill has numerous other critical components—one of which being the assistance it provides to our Nation's first responders. The First Responder Coalition, a group consisting of tens of thousands of concerned citizens and first responders, strongly supports this legislation as it delivers key assistance for interoperability. "Interoperability" is a term that refers to local, State, and Federal agencies being able to communicate effectively during the time of a crisis. This legislation will allocate up to \$1 billion in much-needed funds to first responders specifically for interoperable communications, and my amendment adopted in committee will speed up the delivery of that important funding. As we witnessed in last year's devastating hurricane season, local governments need dedicated and easily accessible technology so they can communicate with each other, as well as State and Federal authorities in the event of similar circumstances that require critical early responses. In Louisiana, nothing could be more important for us.

I am asking us today to heed the call for the entire country deserving for the great benefits of this bill. We have an opportunity to get the job done right—once and for all—for America's consumers. We need choices in television providers, more broadband deployment, vital interoperability funding, and more technology to rural areas. The Advanced Telecommunications Opportunity Reform Act of 2006 is the right next step for us.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, today and throughout Hispanic Heritage Month, we honor the proud history of our Nation's Hispanic community, and we pay tribute to the extraordinary contributions that people of Hispanic heritage have made and continue to make to the United States.

In 1968, Congress authorized President Lyndon Johnson to proclaim a week in September as National Hispanic Heritage Week. The observance was expanded in 1988 to a month-long celebration. During this month, America celebrates the culture and traditions of Spain, Mexico and the Spanish-speaking nations of Central America, South America and the Caribbean. The celebration begins on September 15 because that is the anniversary of independence of five Latin American countries—Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on September 16 and September 18, respectively.

National Hispanic Heritage Month celebrates people whose roots extend back to more than 20 different nations around the world and who are an integral part of America's communities. Currently, there are more than 43 million Hispanic Americans, the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States. Hispanic Americans are the

most decorated ethnic group in the history of our military, and we are deeply grateful for their contributions to our Nation's defense.

Hispanic Americans have made invaluable contributions to every part of American society, from the arts, to medicine to politics to our economy. We are a richer nation in every sense because of those contributions, and because of what they represent—a country that draws strength from its great diversity.

But as we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, it is also time to address the challenges that face the Hispanic community, such as lack of access to education and health care, inadequate working conditions, racial profiling and, for many, the difficulty of keeping their families together while working to become legal, permanent residents of this great country.

This celebration should serve as a call to action for Congress. We must ensure that Hispanic Americans have access to educational and economic opportunities as they pursue the American dream. I have long fought attempts to cut funding for important programs such as Pell grants, the High School Equivalency Program, and College Assistance Migrant Program. I have cosponsored the DREAM Act—the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act—which would provide higher education opportunities for children who are long-term U.S. residents of good moral character, and who came to this country illegally as children through no fault of their own.

Another crucial piece of legislation is AgJOBS—the Agricultural Job Opportunities, Benefits, and Security Act. This proposal would enable undocumented agricultural workers to legalize their status, and would reform the H2-A agricultural worker visa program so that growers and workers will not continue to rely on illegal paths to employment in the future.

Congress must also continue working toward establishing a realistic immigration system that has adequate opportunities for people to come to the United States legally. In Wisconsin, businessowners have come to rely on foreign workers for their economic success. Simply imposing new border security measures alone, which some have advocated, is not enough.

In closing, I want to express my hope that Congress will work to address these issues and other urgent matters for Hispanic Americans across the country. We should not limit our celebration of Hispanic Heritage to one month but rather work all year long to ensure that all Hispanic Americans can equally participate in, and contribute to, the progress of our great Nation.

TRAGEDY STRIKES AGAIN

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, it is unfortunate that it sometimes seems to

require high profile tragic school shootings to focus the Nation's attention on the easy access to guns by young adults and children. Sadly, we find ourselves once again examining the subject in the aftermath of not one, but two shootings.

On April 27, 1999, we paused in the Senate to observe a moment of silence in tribute to those who died at Columbine High School and to express our sympathy for their loved ones. Since that tragedy, tens of thousands of people have been killed by guns and, according to the Brady Campaign, there is an unlocked gun in one of every eight family homes.

On September 13, 2006, a 25-year-old man opened fire in the cafeteria at Dawson College in Montreal, Canada. He began firing randomly at students killing one and injuring 19 others. Five of those injured are in critical condition. Wielding a rapid-fire rifle in addition to two other weapons, the shooter walked through the halls of the college shooting indiscriminately. Prior to the incident, the shooter had openly expressed his fondness for the events surrounding the 1999 slaughter at Columbine High School. While this episode took place in Canada, similar incidences have occurred all too frequently in the United States.

On September 17, 2006, five Duquesne University basketball players were shot while leaving a school dance. So far, two young men have been arraigned on charges of attempted homicide, aggravated assault, criminal conspiracy and weapons-related offenses. A 19-year-old woman has been arrested on charges of reckless endangerment, carrying a firearm without a license and criminal conspiracy. One player, remains in critical condition with one bullet and fragments of another in his head.

It is impossible to come to terms with these or any of the other shooting tragedies that have claimed the lives of far too many young people. Yet after such tragedies, we ask ourselves if they might have been prevented. The answer, of course, at least in part is yes. Congress can and must work to keep guns out of the hands of young people.

What will it take to pass legislation that requires firearms to be sold or transferred with storage or safety devices? What will it take to pass child access prevention legislation, which would require adults to store firearms safely and securely in places that are reasonably inaccessible to children? Congress and the President should work to enact these and other common-sense gun safety reforms that will keep our young people alive and safe.

PHYSICIAN REIMBURSEMENT

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to speak about an issue that would greatly impact this

country's physicians and our constituents ability to access care. The issue of physician reimbursements under Medicare is important to me and my Colorado constituents. Congress was able to take steps to address the reimbursement issue for 2006, but once again physicians are faced with the possibility of a decreased reimbursement for 2007. Many physicians and physician groups have contacted Congress, requesting that the problem be addressed.

Ellice Zirinski, who works in Family Practice in Arvada, CO, wanted Congress to know that she would strongly urge them to take action and increase Medicare reimbursement to physicians. Should reimbursement decline as legislated, she could no longer afford to give care to her patients and stay in practice. She does not want to jeopardize her patients' access to care. We need to find a way to provide physicians with a positive reimbursement before January 2007. For some time, physicians in Colorado have been concerned with the possibility of a reduction in their reimbursement schedule.

I am greatly concerned with the fact that hospitals, nursing homes, and other Medicare providers continue to receive positive updates, while private physicians are forced to no longer accept Medicare patients, or, even worse, forced out of practice. Tom Mino, a Doctor of Osteopathy in Broomfield, CO, told me, "I may have to consider a change in occupation—or at least move away from solo practice." This trend could result in more physicians practicing in an institutional setting instead of private practice. This concerns me greatly.

I have heard time and time again that Colorado's rural physicians will have no other choice than to stop accepting Medicare patients. Mark Laitos, an M.D. in Longmont, CO, said, "I live in a small town. My patients are my friends and my friends are my patients. We go to church together. I won't abandon them, but my biggest worry is that my practice will be overrun with new Medicare patients as more and more of my colleagues make the decision to stop seeing Medicare patients." That means that my rural constituents will no longer have access to care.

The final conference agreement on the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, S. 1932, approved February 1, 2006, overrode the mandatory 4.4 percent decrease for 2006 by freezing payments at the 2005 levels. A freeze in the physician reimbursement rate for 2007 is not enough. We need to take steps to ensure that physicians receive a positive reimbursement update.

The issue of physician reimbursement affects the entire United States and all of our constituents. Because of this, I urge my colleagues to take the necessary action to ensure that physicians receive a positive Medicare reimbursement update for 2007.